

Christ [Episcopal] Church
Indianapolis Indiana

Marion Co.

H.A.B.S. No. 24-3

HABS
IND.

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
DISTRICT NO. 24
REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

Historic American Buildings Survey
Herbert W. Foltz, District Officer
333 N. Pennsylvania St. Indianapolis Ind.

CHRIST CHURCH
INDIANAPOLIS INDIANA

HABS No.24-3

1. Before the present building was erected there stood a frame church erected in 1837 when the population of Indianapolis was less than 2500.
-(Church record)
2. The present church edifice was erected in 1857 when the population of Indianapolis was a little over 15000.
-(Church record)
3. The Architect was Wm. Tinsley who was born in Colomel, Ireland, Feb. 7, 1804, and died in Cincinnati, Ohio, June 14, 1885.
-(Information by Mrs. H. M. Glossbrenner; also Church record)
4. The original chancel was rectangular in shape, size about 12 ft. wide. (Shown on blue print of first floor in possession of Robert Frost Daggett) The chimes were placed in tower in 1860. Bells cast at Troy, N. Y.
-(Church record)
5. The spire was constructed in 1869 from original plans.
-(Church record)
6. The South wood porch, enlarged chancel, parish house, rood screen, reredos and chancel windows were designed by C.R. Lamb, Architect, New York in 1900. Contractor- Ferd C. Smock, Indianapolis.
7. The finial on top of spire spells "Christ" from the Greek (CHI-RHO)
(Information by Rev. E. Ainger Powell, present Pastor)
8. The original choir and organ was in the transept
(Verified by church record photographs)
9. The original vestry was to the north of chancel where the organ chamber is now located.
(Information from blue print of first floor plan by Robert Frost Daggett)

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10. The basement was added in 1927 according to plans of Robert Frost Daggett, Architect, Indianapolis. Leslie Colvin, Contractor, Indianapolis. This required the underpinning of masonry walls.
(Verbal information by Robert Frost Daggett)
11. Marble altar donated by family of Col. Eli Lilly.
-(Church Record)
12. Brass lecturn donated by Mrs. Cecelia M. Wulsin.
-(Church record)
13. Brass and oak pulpit donated by Dr. J. Ewing Mears.
-(Church record)
14. Marble Baptistry - Designed by Cram, Goodhue & Ferguson, New York.
-(Information by Robert Frost Daggett)

March, 1934

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HISTORY OF CHRIST CHURCH

INDIANAPOLIS, INDIANA

The movement for the organization of Christ Church was begun in April, 1837. In point of time it was the fifth of the religious bodies of the city to begin formal work in Indianapolis. The population of the city at this time was about 2500. The first service was held July 9, 1837. A meeting for organization was held on July 13, 1837. Thirty people attended this meeting. The name chosen was "The Parish of Christ Church." The Rev. J.B. Britton was the first regularly appointed minister and he served in this capacity until 1840.

The first vestry was elected August 21, 1837. The organization was received into union with the Diocese in 1838. The erection of a house of worship was begun without delay and the corner stone was placed on May 7, 1838, by Bishop Jackson Kemper, the first Bishop of Indiana, assisted by the Masonic Order.

The first services in the new church were held Nov. 18, 1838, and the church was consecrated December 16 of the same year. The first church building was a plain but neatly finished and strongly built Gothic edifice of wood frame construction. It was considered to be the handsomest church in Indiana and many letters were received from various parts of the State requesting drawings of the spire, as it was then called, this being merely a belfry stuck upon the front gable of the church. The building was used until 1857, when it was sold to the African Methodist Church and removed to West Georgia Street, where it subsequently burned, it was claimed, by incendiaries.

The present church building was erected in 1857, the population of the city at that time being a little over 15,000. The Census of 1860 gives it as 18,611.

The original church building did not have the present chancel, parish house, basement, and entrance porch. The parish house was added and the chancel was enlarged to its present dimensions in 1900, the rectory giving place to the enlarged chancel and parish house. The chimes were added in 1860, and were heard for the first time September 14, 1860. The spire was added in

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1869, the finial at the top spelling "Christ"
(Greek - CHU-RHO)

The old chancel was about 12 ft. x 23 ft., rectangular in shape before being enlarged; the choir was in the East end of the transept; the organ was in the Southeast corner of transept; the vestry was to the North of the chancel where the organ is now. The vestry had an outside entrance in rear.

The wood screen between transept and chancel was added in 1900; the front porch in 1900; the basement in 1927.

All Indianapolis and Indiana have a sentimental interest in Christ Church, particularly because of its association with the Monument in making the Circle attractive. Some call it "The Little Church around the Corner" of Indianapolis. It stands in the heart of the business district, one square removed from Washington Street, the main business street of Indianapolis, and next to the Board of Trade Building.

Sometimes predictions are made that Christ Church eventually will be driven from the business district but, somehow, this church is woven into the city's business life in a way that makes it part of it. The doors are always open and many business men and women steal into its quiet pews for a few moments of reflection and prayer during the day. The clatter of traffic and the hum of voices of passers-by are but dimly heard within.

The interior of the church is impressive in its beauty. Windows bearing Christian symbols are numerous, several of them very costly. Former rectors have been well remembered by dedication of windows in their memory. Family memorials to beloved dead are also found in the beautiful windows. The interior is given the appearance of massiveness by large flying arch trusses that underspan the roof.

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These timbers are of a type that could with difficulty be reproduced today. They sweep across the space beneath the pitched roof and impress one with their strength and grace.

One of the striking features of the building is the vine-clad parish house, from which the vines are creeping up the rugged stone walls of the church proper, gradually restoring to it the appearance of old days when the entire building was covered with vines.

The foregoing historical sketch of Christ Church was compiled by Paul Lieske from the church records and data furnished by Mrs. H. M. Glossbrenner. Mr. Lieske was a member of a group of four assigned to this project in connection with the Historical American Buildings Survey in Indiana.

(Signed)

Herbert A. Folth

DISTRICT OFFICER

- March, 1934

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